

## *Personal Biography*

At the age of 36, Mike Abrashoff was selected to become Commander of USS Benfold -- at the time, the most junior commanding officer in the Pacific Fleet. Mike took command of his first ship and wasted no time instituting radical changes. Antiquated, do-as-I-say leadership practices literally went overboard when Mike stepped aboard USS Benfold. He went to work on one of the lowest retention rates and poorest performing ships, solving core problems with a new philosophy he called “grassroots” solutions. Practices that included converting dated command and control with commitment and cohesion to Mike’s greatest asset in any situation – People. Immediately after leaving the Navy, Mike founded GrassRoots Leadership, advising organizations on how to improve their strategy through empowering people, while increasing profits and cutting costs.

Prior to commanding USS Benfold, Mike served as the Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, the Honorable Dr. William J. Perry. In this demanding role, Mike accompanied the Secretary of Defense throughout the world on critical missions of national security.

Other experiences that have influenced Mike's leadership skills include helping to draft the air defense plan for naval forces in the Persian Gulf in 1990, coinciding with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait; and serving as the Executive Officer of the Cruiser Shiloh, where he traveled to the Persian Gulf in support of United Nations sanctions against Iraq.

Mike is originally from Altoona, Pennsylvania, and is a 1982 graduate of the Naval Academy of Annapolis. He currently lives in Bay Harbor Island, Florida.

